

*Standish. Myles*

## Myles Standish

STANDISH, Myles, soldier, born in Lancashire, England, about 1584 ; died in Duxbury, Massachusetts, 3 October, 1656. It is supposed that he was a scion of the Standish family of Duxbury Hall in Lancashire, and that his name was erased from the family register to deprive him of a share in the estate. The name is ancient, and Froissart, describing the meeting between Richard II, and Wat Tyler, relates how the latter was killed by a "squyer of the kynges called John Standysshe," who was knighted for this act. Later another Sir John Standish participated in the battle of Agincourt. While still a youth, Myles entered the English forces on the continent, and after serving in the Netherlands he joined in Leyden the colony that sailed in the "Mayflower" from Plymouth, England, on 16 September, 1620. The vessel anchored in the Bay of Cape Cod on 21 November, 1620, and on 25 November sixteen armed men, "every one his Musket, Sword, and Corslet, Under the command of Captaine Myles Standish," were sent ashore for a second exploration. They marched in single file through what is now Provincetown, where they saw several Indians, followed their tracks about ten miles, and spent the night in the woods. Three subsequent expeditions were sent out. On the third, after landing in the vicinity of Eastham, they went toward Wellfleet, found an Indian burying-place and Indian houses, and encamped before nightfall at Nanskeket. On the following day they were surprised by the Indians, upon whom Standish fired, but the skirmish was slight. On 29 September, 1621, after the founding of Plymouth, a party of ten men, with three savages as guides, under command of Standish, who had been appointed military captain in February, 1621, explored Massachusetts bay. They anchored off what is now Thomson's island, which Standish explored and named Trevore. This party also explored the broad plain known as "Massachusetts fields," the gathering-place of the tribes, which comprised a part of what is now Quincy. In 1622 Thomas Weston sent out emigrants to plant a new colony, which they did at Wessagussett (now Weymouth). They incurred the enmity of the Massachusetts Indians, who formed a plot to destroy them; but, fearing that such an act would be avenged by the Plymouth colony, they decided to exterminate the English. Before this plan was executed, Massasoit revealed the plot, and the Plymouth colonists determined to send an expedition to Wessagussett. Fearful of exciting the suspicion of the Indians by an armed body, Myles Standish selected eight men to march to the relief of that colony, which he found in a wretched condition. By Massasoit's advice, Standish, with a few of his men, enticed the chiefs Pecksuot and Wituwamat, with a half-brother of the latter, into a room, and, closing the door, killed the Indians after a desperate fight. This was the first Indian blood that was shed by the Pilgrims. A general battle ensued in the open field, from which the Indians fled and in which no lives were lost. This victory of Standish spread terror among the savages, and, as a warning to further depredations, the head of Wituwamat was exposed to view at Plymouth. When the news of Standish's exploit reached the pious John Robinson, the pastor at Leyden, he wrote to the governor of Plymouth on 19 December, 1623, "to consider the disposition of their captain, who was of a warm temper," and concluded with the remark: "O how happy a thing had it been that you had converted some before you had killed any!" In the summer of 1625 the colony was



in great trouble, owing to its unhappy relation with its partners, the so-called "merchant adventurers" in London, and Captain Standish was sent to England to seek relief, bearing a letter from Governor William Bradford to the council of New England urging their intervention in behalf of the colony ; but Bradford says that, on account of the plague in London, Standish could accomplish nothing. In 1628 Standish captured Thomas Morton, of Merry Mount (q. v). In retaliation for an attack of D'Aulnay (see CHARNISE, AULNAY DE), who drove away in 1635 a party of Plymouth men at Penobscot, Plymouth despatched a vessel and a force under Standish to compel the surrender of the French at that post; but this expedition failed. In addition to being the military leader of every exploit of importance in the colony, his counsel was often required in civil affairs, and for many years he was also treasurer of the colony. He was not a member of the Plymouth communion, but was a dissenter from the dissenters. He was resolute, stern, bold, and of incorruptible integrity, "an iron-nerved Puritan who could hew down forests and live on crumbs." A portrait, painted on an old panel, was found in 1877 in a picture-shop in School street, Boston, bearing the date 1625, and " Aetatis Sua, 38," on which the name of M. Standish was discovered after removing the frame. It now hangs in Pilgrim hall, Plymouth, and is reproduced in the accompanying vignette. His first wife, Rose, died on 29 January, 1621, and his second courtship has been made the subject of a romance by Henry W. Longfellow, in which there are several anachronisms. Although his envoy, John Alden, won his chosen bride, Priscilla Mullens, they remained close friends until death, and later generations of the Standish and Alden families intermarried. A tradition says that his second wife, Barbara, was the younger sister of Rose Standish. In his will, dated 7 March, 1655, he left his property to his wife, Barbara, and to his four sons, Alexander, Myles, Josias, and Charles. His goods and chattels, worth £350, were exhibited in the court that was held in Plymouth on 4 May, 1657 One of his swords is preserved in the cabinet of the Massachusetts historical society, and another is in Pilgrim hall, Plymouth. Several other relics are in the possession of the Pilgrim society, which also owns a piece of ingenious embroidery made by his daughter, Lora. In 1632 several of the "Mayflower" families settled in Duxbury, Massachusetts Standish established himself on "Captain's Hill," so named from his military office, and it is probable that he was buried there. It is supposed that his house stood unchanged until about 1666, and that it was then enlarged by his son Alexander, who it is thought was a trader and possibly town-clerk of Duxbury. The present house was built by this son. A granite monument is now being erected to his memory on Captain's Hill, Duxbury, as seen in the accompanying illustration. The shaft is one hundred feet in height and upon it stands a statue of Standish looking eastward. His right hand, holding the charter of the colony, is extended toward Plymouth, while his left rests upon his sheathed sword.

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